

**Thomas Jefferson to John Daly Burk, June 21, 1801,
The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes.
Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester
Ford.**

TO JOHN D. BURKE J. MSS.

Washington, June 21, 1801.

Dear Sir, —I have safely received your favor from Amelia, with the [*faded*] of the Columbiad which it covered, and have given to them the hasty persual which my less agreeable but more indispensable occupations have permitted. Rarely indeed do they permit me one moment's reflection from the volumes of official papers which every day presents. The few moments I now spare to this object, I will say, were agreeably employed on your sheets with much satisfaction. To my own mortification however [*faded*] that of all men living I am the last who should undertake to decide as to the merits of poetry. In earlier life I was fond of it, and easily pleased. But as age and cares advanced the powers of fancy have declined. Every year seems to have plucked a feather from her wings till she can no longer wait one to those sublime heights to which it is necessary to accompany the poet. So much has my relish for poetry deserted me that at present I cannot read even Virgil with pleasure. I am consequently utterly incapable to decide on the merits of poetry. The very feelings to which it is addressed are among those I have lost. So that the blind man might as well undertake to [*faded*] a painting or the deaf a musical composition.

On the subject of office my principles and those constantly asserted by the republicans, that no one should be removed for mere difference of political opinion, has given little to do in this way. It is moreover only the offices of the first grade which are at my disposal; those of the 2d being subordinated to them; [*faded*] the office of each grade being thus in the

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gift of the one next above. I will with pleasure mention you to the heads of departments: but not to do you an injury by nourishing expectations which might not be fulfilled, I am bound to observe that I know there has been a vast redundancy of applications, so that it is not likely that any vacancy exists. Indeed among the [*faded*] there are many supernumeraries who will be to be dismissed, or the numbers [*faded*] recruited till reduced to a mere sufficiency by ordinary accidents. Accept my respectful salutations & good wishes.

P. S. the sheets are herein returned.